



Department of Homeland Security Daily Open Source Infrastructure Report for 05 December 2007

Current Nationwide



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- The Associated Press reported on the aftermath of the second of back-to-back severe storms that battered the Northwest Monday, leaving at least four dead. Several inches of rain and hurricane-force winds downed trees, blocked roads and left widespread power outages across the region Tuesday. Power company officials said electricity may not be restored to some areas for several days. The Coast Guard reported two deaths as the result of a dike failure in Washington state, and dispatched helicopters to assist about 100 others left in distress by the flooding. (See items [2](#) & [34](#))
- According to documents obtained by The Associated Press, the Bush administration intends to slash counterterrorism funding for police, firefighters, and rescue departments across the country by more than half next year. Additionally, the documents indicate plans to call for outright elimination of programs for port security, transit security, and local emergency management operations in the next budget year. (See item [20](#))

DHS Daily Open Source Infrastructure Report Fast Jump

Production Industries: [Energy; Chemical; Nuclear Reactors, Materials and Waste; Defense Industrial Base; Dams](#)

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Energy Sector

Current Electricity Sector Threat Alert Levels: Physical: ELEVATED, Cyber: ELEVATED

Scale: LOW, GUARDED, ELEVATED, HIGH, SEVERE [Source: ISAC for the Electricity Sector (ES-ISAC) – <http://www.esisac.com>]

1. *December 4, Washington Post* – (Maryland) **Power outages forecast for Maryland.** Maryland's deregulation of electricity markets failed to deliver lower prices but instead led to rate spikes for millions of customers and left the state vulnerable to power shortages so severe that they could cause frequent brownouts, a highly critical report by

state regulators concludes. The Maryland Public Service Commission said in the report, released last night, that the excessive rates and threats to the region's power supply are so dire that it must step in, using its authority to force utility companies to buy more electricity. The regulatory agency also plans to require utilities to implement an aggressive series of conservation programs that would, for example, reward customers with rebates if they turn off their air conditioners on hot days. "We cannot . . . do nothing," says the report. "Unless steps are taken now, Maryland faces a critical shortage of electricity capacity." The shortage could be so severe by 2011 that regulators might need to require "mandatory use restrictions and rolling blackouts," the report says. The commission chairman is expected to tell the Senate Finance Committee that because the demand for electricity is growing so much faster than new power supplies are being added, brownouts on hot summer days could be routine within five years. The report represents the commission's first effort to assess the impact of Maryland's switch to a competitive power market in 1999.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/03/AR2007120302046.html>

2. *December 4, Associated Press* – (Northwest) **Storm leaves downed trees, outages in NW.** Downed trees blocked roads and power outages were widespread Tuesday across much of the Northwest, where residents prepared for a massive cleanup effort after being battered by back-to-back storms. A severe storm smacked the region Monday with hurricane-force winds and several inches of rain, and was blamed for four deaths. It came only a day after another severe system moved through. Power companies said electricity may not be restored to some areas for three or four days, and some utilities planned to survey the damage by helicopter Tuesday. More stiff winds were likely, but nothing like the blasts that exceeded 120 miles mph at the height of the storm. Most of the Olympic Peninsula, Kitsap County and southwest Washington were hit particularly hard by the storm. According to the state's governor, some 80,000 people had lost electric power across western Washington. Portland-based Pacific Power said about 23,000 customers were without power Monday night.

Source: http://www.wral.com/news/national_world/national/story/2121222/

3. *December 4, Reuters* – (International) **Pirates attack Exxon vessel in Nigeria, one killed.** Pirates attacked a vessel operated by ExxonMobil in the Niger Delta in southern Nigeria on Tuesday, killing a crew member and injuring another, private security contractors working in the oil industry said. Attacks by politically motivated rebels in the delta, who last year shut down a fifth of Nigerian oil production, have subsided since a new president took office in May, but armed robbers and pirates still stage sporadic raids in the creeks. Details of Tuesday's incident were sketchy, as is often the case with Niger Delta attacks, but three security contractors said about seven or eight gunmen in a speedboat boarded the Seamark vessel on the Bonny River, in Rivers state. Nigeria, an OPEC member, is the world's eighth-biggest exporter of crude oil and disruptions to supply due to violence in the Niger Delta are one of the causes of oil's climb towards \$100 a barrel.

Source: http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20071204/wl_nm/nigeria_attack_dc

4. *December 2, Press Associates, Inc.* – (National) **Report raises concern about oil refinery hazards.** Safety hazards that led to the deaths of 15 workers at a BP plant in Texas are widespread in the oil industry, a new study shows. The report came the same week as two workers were killed and another is missing in two different accidents at Minnesota facilities. On November 29, two workers died in an explosion and fire at the Enbridge Energy oil pipeline terminal in Clearbrook, Minnesota. Two days later, another worker was reported missing following an explosion and fire at the Marathon Petroleum Co. in St. Paul Park, Minnesota. Both accidents are under investigation. The same day as the Clearbrook explosion, the United Steelworkers released a detailed survey of 51 refineries across the United States where the union represents workers. The union found many of the same conditions that led to the fatal March 2005 blast at a British Petroleum refinery in Texas City, Texas. Fifteen people were killed and hundreds injured. In an earlier report, the U.S. Chemical Standards Board strongly criticized BP for numerous safety failings, including failing to monitor safety of the entire production process and cutting back safety personnel. Its chair told Congress that hazards found at Texas City easily apply not just to the whole oil industry, but to factories in general.

Source: http://www.workdayminnesota.org/index.php?news_6_3396

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Chemical Industry Sector

5. *December 4, Rutland Herald* – (Vermont) **State OKs Omya waste treatment plant.** Omya Inc. received an Act 250 permit to build a \$10 million treatment facility to deal with its marble waste. Still unresolved, however, is the final disposition of the calcium carbonate company's chemically tainted waste, or tailings byproduct, at its Florence, Vermont, plant. The District One Environmental Commission on Friday issued an Act 250 permit for the dewatering facility, which includes two 40-foot high, 380,000-gallon storage tanks, a 75-foot in diameter circular "thickener" that separates the solids from the water, a 4,500-square-foot dewatering processing building and a 1,500-square-foot storage area for the tailings. Omya said the facility would remove 90 percent of the process water from the marble waste, which would then be pumped back into the plant for reuse. The remaining "thickened" tailings would be sold or disposed of at a tailings management area on the company's property. The dewatering facility is seen by the company and the state as a way to address public concerns about possible health and environmental effects associated with its tailings, which have been dumped in settling ponds for more than 20 years. Omya officials, though, have steadfastly maintained that the tailings, which contain an assortment of chemicals, pose no threat to human health or the environment.

Source:

<http://www.rutlandherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071204/NEWS01/712040360>

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Nuclear Reactors, Materials, and Waste Sector

6. *December 4, WFAA 8 Dallas/Fort Worth* – (Texas) **Radioactive container found in Tarrant County.** A container with a potentially dangerous variety of uranium inside was found in Tarrant County, Texas. Crews had been searching for a device used to X-ray machinery that contained depleted uranium. The device fell off a truck on Monday. After an extensive search, a woman called to say she saw the story on the news, and that her husband had picked up the box. The World Health Organization says depleted uranium is an extremely dense metal that is commonly used as a radiation shield. It has approximately 60 percent of the radiation contained in purified natural uranium.
Source: http://www.wfaa.com/sharedcontent/dws/wfaa/localnews/news8/stories/wfaa071204_wz_uranium.67861fde.html
7. *December 3, Nuclear Regulatory Commission* – (Texas) **NRC to conduct special inspection at Comanche Peak nuclear plant.** The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will conduct a special inspection to evaluate problems related to an emergency diesel generator at the Comanche Peak nuclear plant. The plant, located near Glen Rose, Texas, is operated by Luminant. NRC is taking this action following the failure of an emergency diesel generator to activate during testing on November 21. NRC requires the emergency diesel generators be tested monthly to ensure they are capable of performing their safety function. The generators produce electricity for safety systems and components in the event of a loss of offsite power during an emergency.
Source: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/news/2007/07-042.iv.html>
8. *December 3, Associated Press* – (New York) **New York opposing Indian Point reactor license.** New York's attorney general (AG) is opposing new licenses for the Indian Point nuclear power plants. The AG says the new licenses, which would allow the plants to operate until 2033 and 2035, should be denied because the plants are susceptible to terrorist attack, the area around them could not be safely evacuated, and their aging structures increase the chance of a radioactive leak. He has filed papers with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to oppose the licenses. A decision on relicensing is probably more than a year away. Entergy Nuclear, the division of Entergy Corp. that owns the plants, says Indian Point is safe and closing it would be a blow to the region's economy and environment.
Source: http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/071203/indian_point_license.html?.v=1

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Defense Industrial Base Sector

9. *December 4, Washington Post* – (National) **Pentagon may support Air Force bid for more F-22 fighters.** The Defense Department is seriously considering supporting an Air Force request to purchase additional F-22 stealth fighters from Lockheed Martin, according to people familiar with the matter. Such a purchase, which would require congressional approval, would be a victory for the Air Force, which has for years argued

that it needed significantly more F-22s than the 183 that the Defense Department has previously deemed necessary and affordable. It would also be a financial boon for the Bethesda defense contractor, which is facing a flattening of aeronautics sales while new fighter jet programs ramp up. An F-22 sells for \$130 million to \$135 million. The F-22 is a highly maneuverable fighter jet with a supercruise engine that flies undetected and is designed to dominate the air in combat situations. Production of the F-22 is scheduled to begin shutting down next October, but a spokeswoman for the Air Force said in a statement that it has officially requested that the production line remain open. It takes more than 30 months to build an F-22, and some of the parts needed for production take several years to procure and mold into shape. "Lockheed Martin stands ready to support our Air Force customer and their requirements in whatever way they request," a Lockheed spokesman, said in a statement.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/03/AR2007120301827.html>

10. *December 3, Denver Business Journal* – (National) **IHS lands Air Force contract.**

The U.S. Air Force has given IHS Inc. a \$42 million contract to manage hazardous materials at Department of Defense facilities worldwide. IHS made the announcement Monday. The four-year contract includes a new award to IHS for support at 59 Army installations and renews support to the 32 DOD and federal agency sites that already use the IHS Hazardous Materials Management System. The Army decided to use a single, service-wide system to comply with EPA and OSHA regulations at all Army installations.

Source: <http://biz.yahoo.com/bizj/071203/1558929.html?v=1>

11. *December 3, CVG, Inc.* – (National) **CVG receives \$1.3 million Navy defense contract.** CVG, Inc. announced today that it has been awarded a \$1.3 million, firm-fixed-price contract by Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command to provide shipboard commercial satellite communications terminals for the Navy's Commercial Broadband Satellite Program Small Ship Variant. The contract was awarded on behalf of the Communications Program Office, which develops radios, terminals and antennas, and integrates C4I communication systems for the Navy. CVG will install three high performance Ku-band stabilized SATCOM systems on Navy vessels, enabling dynamic bandwidth allocation. CVG also will provide hub equipment, be required to meet stringent Navy specifications for radio frequency and environmental performance, and train Navy personnel on these systems.

Source: <http://biz.yahoo.com/iw/071203/0329321.html>

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Banking and Finance Sector

12. *December 4, WOOD 8 Grand Rapids* – (Michigan) **Phishing scam targets Flagstar Bank.**

Flagstar Bank officials warned customers that there are bogus computer-generated calls directing recipients to an illegitimate Web site: flagstarservices.com. The trick is to get the unsuspecting person to provide personal information, particularly bank account, birth date and social security information. Flagstar is tracking down the Web

site's origin, and plans to have it shut down soon, but the automated phone call is another matter. An 800-number appears on caller ID programs to mimic a Flagstar number. Flagstar officials said the bank never uses an automated phone service to contact customers.

Source: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22086637/>

13. *December 4, Associated Press* – (Alabama) **Tax scam targets elderly and others.** A new scam has surfaced that has caught the attention of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The tax agency said individuals are targeting elderly residents of several west Alabama counties. Citizens need to be wary of people who claim they can secure a tax refund by using Social Security retirement or disability benefits as taxable income. According to an IRS spokesman in Birmingham, retirement or disability benefits can not be used to generate a tax refund. He said such a claim could result in a stiff fine, a prison sentence or both. He said the scam is being operated mainly in Choctaw, Lamar, Perry, Sumter and Washington counties, but has directly affected others in ten other counties, mostly in Black Belt counties.

Source:

<http://www.journalgazette.net/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071204/APN/712040618&template=apart>

14. *December 3, vnunet.com* – (International) **Bank details for sale on the web.** More than 100 websites have been found selling account information for bank customers in the United Kingdom, including account details, pins and security codes. The UK's information commissioner has called for an immediate investigation after *The Times* claimed that it had been able to download the information for 32 UK customers. One individual was reportedly willing to sell up to 30,000 British credit card numbers for as little as £1 each. An Information Commission spokesman said that the details on sale seemed to be for active accounts and could be enough for someone to spend money online. Security firms and others are calling for immediate government action. One security firm rep said, "We strongly believe that the government should introduce more stringent data breach laws and prosecute any organization which takes such a laissez faire approach to protecting customer data." He added that there is no excuse for major data breaches as the technology is available to enforce security policies to prevent leaks from occurring. This latest issue comes hot on the heels of the UK government's losing 25 million individuals' data, and misplacing two discs with the details of 15,000 Standard Life customers.

Source: <http://www.vnunet.com/vnunet/news/2204889/britons-bank-details-sale-net>

15. *December 3, Coloradoan* – (Colorado) **BBB warns of another credit card scam.** The Better Business Bureau's Northern Colorado office is warning of a scam involving three digits on the back of a credit card -- the personal identification number used as a security feature. The caller says he is calling from the fraud department at Visa (or MasterCard). He notes the card has been flagged for an unusual purchase pattern and he is calling to verify the purchases. He asks several questions, including whether the customers purchased an anti-telemarketing device for \$497.99. When the customers reply that they did not, the caller reassures them that a credit will be issued and a fraud investigation

started. The caller asks them to verify they are in possession of the card and asks for the security code. He encourages customers to call back if they have questions, then hangs up. Following the conversation, the scammer then places a charge – of less than \$500 – to their card.

Source:

<http://www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071203/UPDATES01/71203025>

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Transportation Sector

16. *December 4, Houston Chronicle* – (Texas; National) **Cell phone boarding passes going into use in Houston.** Passengers leaving Houston, Texas, will be the first in the nation to board flights without waving a paper boarding pass, as long as they have a cell phone handy. A unique new check-in procedure using cell phones or personal digital assistants as boarding passes has been unveiled by Continental Airlines and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at George Bush Intercontinental Airport Tuesday. The TSA, which has had a problem with people trying to use fraudulent paper boarding passes in the past, is confident the technology cannot be cracked. Initially, the pilot program will be used solely on Continental flights at Intercontinental. The three-month pilot program involves technology using encrypted bar codes on mobile device screens. Each paperless boarding pass will display a two-dimensional bar code — which looks like a rectangle of TV snow, as opposed to parallel lines of a traditional bar code — along with passenger and flight information that will identify the traveler. TSA document checkers will have handheld scanners to validate the authenticity. Ultimately, it could eliminate the need for a paper document besides photo identification. If successful, plans call for it to be rolled out to other airlines in about three months, said a TSA official.

Source: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/5349969.html>

17. *December 3, KDVR 31 Denver* – (Colorado) **Frontier airlines to use new flight planning system.** Frontier Airlines will be the first U.S. passenger airline to use a new flight planning system that could help keep flights on time. The dispatch software brings together information about not only the plane's weight and passenger load, but weather and wind data to examine thousands of different routes for each flight.

Source:

<http://www.myfoxcolorado.com/myfox/pages/News/Detail?contentId=5114937&version=1&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=TSTY&pageId=3.2.1>

18. *December 1, East Valley Tribune* – (Arizona) **No cause identified for Loop 202 bridge collapse.** The August collapse of a Loop 202 freeway bridge under construction in Mesa, Arizona, could have been the result of wind, shifting temperatures or even Teflon. But engineers who studied the collapse could not pinpoint a specific cause despite months of study, according to report released Friday. Regardless of the cause, the Arizona Department of Transportation will require more widespread use of temporary bracing, which could prevent girders from slipping out of place as they did August 9.

ADOT acknowledged more vigilant inspections could have identified problems before the collapse occurred, the agency spokesman said. The collapse did not reveal a bad design, ADOT said, as was the case of the Minneapolis Interstate-35W bridge collapse that occurred shortly before.

Source: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22054836/>

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Postal and Shipping Sector

19. *December 4, KETV 7 Omaha* – (Nebraska) **4 quarantined after powder found.** Four people are under observation in Lincoln, Nebraska, after powder was sent Tuesday to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office, located in a federal building in the downtown area of the city. Authorities called a level 3 hazmat event, which is the highest response level, and evacuated and quarantined the section of the building closest to where the envelope was found. The worker who opened the envelope and three others were taken in for observation, though none have displayed any symptoms. There are 350 people who work in the building and their movements have been restricted to their work areas. Federal officials have been called.

Source: <http://www.ketv.com/news/14769554/detail.html>

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Agriculture and Food Sector

20. *December 4, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation* – (Ohio) **Portions of Ohio declared natural disaster areas by USDA.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated all 88 Ohio counties as natural disasters areas due to losses from this year's drought and heat conditions. In the declaration, the acting secretary of the USDA designated 73 primary counties and 15 contiguous counties, all of which are eligible for the same emergency relief in the form of low-interest loans. Those farms affected by the drought and extreme heat conditions that began in mid-May have eight months from the approved date of the secretary's declaration to apply for emergency loans.

Source: <http://ofbf.org/page/DTOD-79JK8L/>

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Water Sector

21. *December 4, Advocate* – (Connecticut) **Norwalk River swimming in E. coli bacteria.** While the dry summer should have helped the Norwalk River, instead, the amount of E. coli bacteria in the water was significantly higher than allowed by the state Department of Environmental Protection, according to a recently completed report by Earthplace's River Watch program. Causes for the elevated bacteria counts include leaky septic tanks releasing effluent directly into the river, animal waste, runoff and bank erosion. Lawns increasingly go all the way to the river, with no buffer between them and the water, said Earthplace's director, and lawn fertilizers can increase bacteria counts in the river. The

study's author theorizes that with the drier weather, there has been less rainfall to dilute the same amount of bacteria. Other rivers in Connecticut's less developed areas met state standards.

Source: <http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/local/scn-sa-nor.river2dec04,0,688873.story?coll=stam-news-local-headlines>

22. *December 4, Union Tribune* – (California) **Council beats veto on water recycling.** After the San Diego City Council overrode a veto by the city's mayor, the city will become one of a few in the country that recycles its wastewater in its reservoirs. The city faces increasingly uncertain drinking water supplies, but had been unable to move past the "toilet-to-tap" moniker hung on the recycling concept when it emerged in the late 1990s. Still, the victory for water recycling advocates may not produce the desired result, because the council will rely on the mayor's staff to start working toward the project, and it is unclear how aggressive those employees will be given the mayor's strong opposition to human consumption of recycled water.

Source: <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20071204-9999-1n4water.html>

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Public Health and Healthcare Sector

23. *December 4, Associated Press* – (National) **Vaccines are allowed to spoil.** According to estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, hundreds of thousands of doses of vaccines against such diseases as flu, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, mumps, measles, chicken pox, and the cervical cancer virus are thrown out each year because of poor refrigeration at clinics, hospitals and doctors' offices. This is both a public health threat, as children who are given ineffective vaccines are unprotected against these diseases, and a major component of the \$20 million in waste incurred by the federal Vaccines for Children program. In one recent case in Sioux City, Iowa, more than 1,000 families were notified that they needed to get their children revaccinated after state officials found that the refrigerator at the clinic that administered the shots repeatedly dropped below freezing over a 17-month period in 2005 and 2006, potentially ruining the vaccines stored there. Altogether in 2006, there were 32 instances in Iowa in which vaccines were not refrigerated correctly, said the state epidemiologist. She declined to say how many patients were affected, but estimated \$750,000 worth of vaccine in the Vaccine for Children Program was wasted. Other states have experienced similar problems.

Source:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20071204/ap_on_re_us/spoiled_vaccine;_ylt=Agqm0tnqIJ8yfdf47v6T.1es0NUE

24. *December 4, Associated Press* – (International) **Bird flu risks will persist for years, experts warn.** Bird flu will persist for years as the H5N1 virus strain continues to spread, pandemic experts were told Tuesday at an international conference held in India and attended by more than 100 nations. "The virus is still being transmitted between chickens and it is going into wild birds, which are carrying it long distances as they migrate," said a United Nations bird flu expert. The H5N1 virus has afflicted more than

60 countries, forcing the slaughter of hundreds of millions of birds since it began ravaging Asian poultry stocks in late 2003. It is now entrenched in several countries, including Indonesia, Egypt and Nigeria, and has killed at least 206 people worldwide. While the virus remains hard for people to catch, experts fear it will mutate into an easily communicable form, potentially sparking a pandemic. The conference aims to draw up a sustainable plan to fight the threat of bird flu.

Source: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22096732/>

25. *December 4, Associated Press* – (Minnesota) **Officials investigate illness affecting plant workers in Minnesota.** Minnesota health officials are looking into illnesses involving 11 workers at a pork processing plant. The employees have had symptoms including numbness and tingling in their arms and legs. The state health commissioner says two have been hospitalized because of their condition. Some have fully recovered, while others are still going through rehabilitation. The symptoms found in five of the workers mirror those found in a chronic inflammatory condition that is characterized by progressive weakness and impaired sensory functions in legs and arms. While all the employees worked in the same part of the plant, removing hog brains with compressed air, health officials say there is no evidence the meat coming out of the plant in Austin is contaminated or that the public is at risk.

Source: <http://www.whotv.com/Global/story.asp?S=7446635&nav=2HAB>

Government Facilities Sector

Nothing to report.

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Emergency Services Sector

26. *December 4, Associated Press* – (National) **Emergency responders face deep aid cuts.** The Bush administration intends to slash counterterrorism funding for police, firefighters, and rescue departments across the country by more than half next year, according to budget documents obtained by the *Associated Press*. The Homeland Security Department has given \$23 billion to states and local communities to fight terrorism since the September 11 attacks, but one document says the administration is not convinced that the money has been well spent and thinks the nation's highest-risk cities have largely satisfied their security needs. The department wanted to provide \$3.2 billion to help states and cities protect against terrorist attacks in 2009, but the White House said it would ask Congress for less than half; \$1.4 billion, according to a November 26 document. The plan calls for outright elimination of programs for port security, transit security, and local emergency management operations in the next budget year. The Homeland Security department and the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which is in charge of the administration's spending plans, would not provide details about the funding cuts because nothing has been finalized. "It would be premature to speculate on any details that will or will not be a part of the next fiscal

year budget,” an OMB spokesman said, because negotiations between the White House and the Cabinet departments over the budget are not finished.

Source: [http://www.emsresponder.com/web/online/Top-EMS-News/Emergency-Responders-Face-Deep-Aid-Cuts/1\\$6643](http://www.emsresponder.com/web/online/Top-EMS-News/Emergency-Responders-Face-Deep-Aid-Cuts/1$6643)

27. *December 4, International Association of Fire Chiefs* – (National) **House passes volunteer incentive protection language.** According to a press release from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax (HEART) Act of 2007, which excludes from taxable income any property tax benefit and up to \$360 per year of all other payments from a state or local unit of government to volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel. “This is a good first step to protect state and local incentives for America’s hardworking firefighters and EMS personnel,” said the IAFC president. According to the statement, “volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel face ever-increasing demands on their time due to growing emergency call volumes, training and the struggle to balance the career and family obligations of today’s two-income families. To help them, state and local governments provide a number of incentives, including reduced property taxes, banquets, free municipal water and other benefits. In 2002, the IRS began to count such local volunteer incentives as taxable income.” The bill must still be addressed by the Senate.

Source: <http://www.emsresponder.com/online/article.jsp?siteSection=1&id=6638>

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Information Technology

28. *December 4, Reuters* – (International) **Al Qaeda-linked Web sites number 5,600: researcher.** There are now about 5,600 Web sites spreading al Qaeda’s ideology worldwide, and 900 more are appearing each year, a Saudi researcher told a national security conference on Tuesday. Saudi Arabia, the world’s biggest oil exporter, has identified the Internet as a key battlefield with militants who launched a campaign to topple the U.S.-allied ruling royal family in 2003. “Research shows there are more than 5,600 sites on the Internet promoting the ideology of al Qaeda,” the researcher told the Information Technology and National Security conference in the Saudi capital Riyadh. “There are some 900 news sites appearing every year, and despite the retreat of some media outlets specifically run by al Qaeda, extremist Web sites are constantly on the rise.” He said it was difficult to track most of the sites, though hardcore al Qaeda sites often change addresses to avoid detection or start up again elsewhere once infiltrated. He was addressing a conference organized by the Saudi intelligence agency to encourage the public to cooperate more with the government and share expertise on how to survey the Internet for militant activity. This week the Saudi intelligence agency launched a Web site in an effort to open up to the public and change the negative perceptions of security services. People can send information anonymously to the site about any suspicious activity. Analysts say al Qaeda has transformed from a close-knit militant group to a brand that disseminates radical ideas for sympathizers to act on independently. “The Internet, chat lines, text messages -- these are the new warriors,” said an expert on Internet monitoring known as “text mining.”

Source:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSL0488465620071204?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews&rpc=22&sp=true>

29. *December 4, IDG News Service* – (International) **F-Secure: Malware samples doubled in one year.** Finnish security vendor F-Secure has collected twice as many malicious software samples this year than it has over the last 20 years, a trend that highlights the growing danger of malicious software on the Internet. Through the end of 2006 and 20 years prior, F-Secure counted a total of 250,000 samples, said the firm's chief research officer. This year alone, 250,000 samples have been counted, he said. Statistics on malware from antivirus companies can vary since the data is often derived from what their customers experience while using their software, and it depends on how widely that software is used. But other security vendors have also noted the flood of new malware on the Internet over the last few years. Symantec said earlier this year that it detected 212,101 new malicious code threats between January and June, an increase of 185 percent over the same period a year prior. The astounding increase shows that hackers "are generating large number of different [malware] variants on purpose to make the lives of antivirus vendors more difficult," the F-Secure rep said. A variant is a piece of malware that has a unique look but belongs to a known family of malware, sharing common code and functions. Hackers use techniques such as obfuscation, which jumbles up code and makes it hard to determine what the program is, and encryption, to trick security programs. "Genuine innovation appears to be on the decline and is currently being replaced with volume and mass-produced kit malware," according to F-Secure's report, which covers the second half of 2007.

Source: http://www.infoworld.com/article/07/12/04/Malware-doubled-in-one-year_1.html

30. *December 4, IDG News Service* – (International) **Microsoft: Windows flaw could steer IE to hackers.** Microsoft said Monday that a flaw in the way its Windows operating system looks up other computers on the Internet has resurfaced and could expose some customers to online attacks. The flaw primarily affects corporate users outside of the U.S. It could theoretically be exploited by attackers to silently redirect a victim to a malicious Web site. Microsoft originally patched this flaw in 1999, but it was rediscovered recently in later versions of Windows and was then publicized at a recent hacker conference in New Zealand. "This is a variation of that previously reported vulnerability that manifests when certain client side settings are made," said a group manager at Microsoft's Security Response Center. The bug has to do with the way Windows systems look for DNS (Directory Name Service) information under certain configurations. Any version of Windows could theoretically be affected by the flaw, but Microsoft issued an advisory Monday explaining which Windows configurations are at risk and offering some possible workarounds for customers. The company said it is working to release a security patch for the problem.

Source: http://www.infoworld.com/article/07/12/04/Microsoft-Windows-flaw-could-steer-IE-to-hackers_1.html

Internet Alert Dashboard

To report cyber infrastructure incidents or to request information, please contact US-CERT at soc@us-cert.gov or visit their Website: www.us-cert.gov.

Information on IT information sharing and analysis can be found at the IT ISAC (Information Sharing and Analysis Center) Website: <https://www.it-isac.org/>.

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Communications Sector

31. *December 4, Associated Press* – (Southeast) **DSL outage hits some AT&T customers.**

AT&T Inc. customers in the Southeast United States were unable to connect to the Internet through their DSL service for several hours Monday night because of an equipment problem, a company spokesman said. He said the digital subscriber line service was restored about 10 p.m. CST. He said the outage affected customers in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee. “The root cause of the disruption is still being investigated but appears to be an equipment impairment,” he said in a statement. The editor of the industry newsletter DSL Prime, said broadband outages are not unusual. “Broadband goes down much more often than telephone lines because they didn’t build the system for the same level of reliability,” he said. “We do not know how often it happens, however, because they’re not obligated to report it.” At the Internet forum DSLreports.com, people in several of the affected states posted reports of problems Monday night. Many said it appeared to be an issue with AT&T’s domain name servers, which help direct Internet traffic to its destinations. He also noted that an entire territory can be affected by a single point of failure, such as a disrupted domain name server, when the network does not have a backup for the server.

Source:

<http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5guSEQBOeibrt6c9KjbES2zonTQtwD8TAE8UG0>

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Commercial Facilities Sector

32. *December 4, Lompoc Record* – (California) **Fake bomb disrupts Celite mining operations.** The bomb squad from the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Department responded to a call at the Celite mining plant Monday morning and found a fake pipe bomb attached to a piece of heavy equipment. It took the squad about five hours to clear the area, while county firefighters stood by, said a sheriff’s spokesman. The hoax device, three inches in diameter and eight to ten inches long, was attached to a portable hydraulic lift, he said. “An unknown person possibly placed it there over the weekend,” the police spokesman said. Celite laid off eight employees about two weeks ago and last week announced that 20 more will be laid off by the end of the year, but officials did not say that the bomb scare was related to the layoffs.

Source:

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National Monuments & Icons Sector

Nothing to report

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Dams Sector

33. *December 3, KGO 7 San Francisco* – (California) **New effort to repair Sacramento levees.** The California Department of Water Resources is sending boats with advanced sonar imaging devices on board into the Sacramento River to find out how badly the levees have eroded. “If they are stable and if they have possible problems that we can identify - then we can fix or remediate,” said a state engineering geologist. Officials have already surveyed the levees from above. With sonar imagery they can see how much of the levee has been eroded below the water line. It puts them in a better position to figure out what and how to repair. New information from the sonar devices is going to be included with all the other information that they have. It will be included in a report due out next fall, which will include ways to repair the levees.

Source: <http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/story?section=news/local&id=5810914>

34. *December 3, Associated Press* – (Washington) **Dike breaks near Chehalis killing two.** The Coast Guard in Seattle reported two fatalities from flooding in Washington. A spokeswoman said the deaths followed a dike breaking near Chehalis. The Coast Guard says it dispatched helicopters to respond to more than 90 people in distress because of today’s flooding. About 80 of those were 20 miles west of Chehalis. Another 10 were trapped in their homes after a dike broke on the Tahyu River.

Source: http://www.khq.com/Global/story.asp?S=7445229&nav=menu438_1

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To report cyber infrastructure incidents or to request information, please contact US-CERT at soc@us-cert.gov or visit their Web page at www.us-cert.gov.

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